

**October 2015**

## Features

## Articles

*CASA Coordinator*  
**Abby Dodge**

*CASA Support Staff*  
**Lissete Borbon**

**Phone: 432-7521**

**Fax: 432-7247**

**[www.casaofarizona.com](http://www.casaofarizona.com)**



Co-Editors: Abby Dodge, LuRue Troyer

Published by LuRue Troyer

[troyer1234@gmail.com](mailto:troyer1234@gmail.com)

**Coordinator's Comments 2**

**October Calendar 4**

**CCCC Flyer 6**

**Volunteer of the Month 6**

**Celebrating Anniversaries 8**

**Welcome to New Volunteers 8**

**Kudos 10**

**CASA Recognition Dinner 14**

**From the Manual 18**

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

**CASA Support Councils Incredibly Valuable 5**  
by Mary Jacobs, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

**Support Group Meeting & Comments 7**  
by Attendees, Cochise County CASA Volunteers

**A New CASA Kid 9**  
by Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

**If You Want Something Done.... 11**  
by Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

**Operator Error 12**  
by Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

**Crossword Puzzle 13**  
**—Solution 17**  
designed & submitted by Bud Dragoo, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

**Seeing Guatemala in a Whole New Way 21**  
by LuRue Troyer, Cochise County CASA Volunteer



Abby Dodge

For those of you who weren't aware, CASA of Cochise County has officially been in existence for 26 years. This would not have been possible without each of you and all of the like-minded people who were with the program at some point during its existence. You are all amazing and you continue to impress me with the level of dedication and support that you provide to these children and to CASA of Cochise County.

## Coordinator's Comments

We held our annual CASA Recognition Dinner on Thursday, September 24th. For all of you who attended, thank you for coming and I hope you enjoyed the evening as much as I did. For those of you who were unable to attend, here are some of the highlights of the evening.

Judge Bannon delivered a heartfelt appreciation for all of the CASA advocates. It was encouraging to hear from the Judge how she values each of your opinions, and how you make her decisions in the courtroom much easier. Judge Bannon was then able to swear in the new CASA advocates that have joined the program since Judge Bannon took the bench. Cathy Carter, Jim LeClair, Kathy Shaughnessy, Cheryl Tomlinson, and Lin Wright were all administered the oath by Judge Bannon. If you are a new CASA and you were unable to attend last night's recognition, the Judge will continue to do these swearing in ceremonies at future recognition events.

We recognized milestone anniversaries within the CASA of Cochise County Program. Some were long overdue, but we are back on track and we will try to remain current going forward. The following people were recognized for 5, 10, 15, or 20 years of service:

**Mary Kay Holcomb** – 5 years (as of 3/2/12)

**Ned Letto** – 5 years (as of 2/2/12)

**Julia McCaa** – 5 years (as of 4/27/14)

**Manny Valenzuela** – 5 years (as of 7/31/11)

**Zanetta Boughan** – 10 years (as of 8/14/12)

**Bud Dragoo** – 10 years (as of 1/23/2014)

**Jan Dragoo** – 10 years (as of 1/23/2014)

**Susan Struck** – 10 years (as of 12/18/11)

**LuRue Troyer** – 10 years (as of 3/4/13)

**Mary Blanchard** – 15 years (as of 9/13/15)

**Patti Hager** – 20 years (as of 5/14/14)

*~Continued on next page*

# Coordinator's Comments [Continued]

Finally, we recognized Patti Hager as CASA of the Year for Cochise County for 2015.



Patti has been involved with CASA of Cochise County since 1994. She took a break from active cases for a short period, but she agreed to take on three interrelated cases last year. I assigned her the three cases because they were all so closely involved. However, they still have separate CFT meetings and separate court hearings. Due to the complexity of these cases, Patti seems

to be in court all the time! Although I am keeping Patti extremely busy with these cases, she has never complained and the level of advocacy she has provided for these children thus far has never wavered. If you happen to see Patti, please remember to congratulate her on this honor of being CASA of the Year!

We have a small gift for each of you, as a token of our appreciation. Those of you who were unable to attend the recognition, please stop by the office next time you have a court hearing. We want to make sure that each of you receives your gift!



I hope that you all realize just how much we here at CASA of Cochise County and others involved in the dependency system appreciate each of you. We may not say it as often as we should, but your hard work and dedication do not go unnoticed. Keep up the great work!

October 2015						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2 World Smile Day	3 <b>**Court Report Writing Class!</b> Please refer to your e-mail for the details**
4	5 <u>Chris H</u> : Court Report Due for GM/LM	6	7	8 Cathy C. & Tracy D. 	9 Fire Prevention Day	10
11	12 Columbus Day (County Offices Open)	13	14 National Dessert Day	15	16 Bosses Day	17 Sweetest Day
18	19	20	21 Pumpkin Cheesecake Day	22	23 HAUNTED HOUSE (Sign up with Abby!)	24 HAUNTED HOUSE (Sign up with Abby!)
25 HAUNTED HOUSE (Sign up with Abby!)	26	27	28	29 <u>Lin W</u> : Court Report due for EA/BA	30 HAUNTED HOUSE (Sign up with Abby!)	31 HAUNTED HOUSE (Sign up with Abby!) 

Created by Lissete Borbon, CASA Support



# CASA Support Councils Incredibly Valuable

by Mary Jacobs, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Two years ago, I was assigned my first case in Cochise County. The 11-year-old girl, D, had never completed a full year of school. She was struggling, and needed special individual assistance to help her catch up in school. The Cochise County CASA Support Council generously provided funding for tutoring for D twice, which I am certain contributed to her improving grades.

D moved back in with her mother last Christmas, who lived in Tucson. In March, the case was dismissed. Thirty days later, D and her baby brother were once again removed from her mother's home and placed with her grandmother and her husband. I requested to be reassigned to the case, even though it is in Tucson, in order to help provide D with some consistency and support. Now 13, this time in her life is more important than ever.

The grandparents have limited funds, and are unable to go through the foster program because he is undocumented. They are providing a loving home for the children, but shortly after I visited, the grandmother informed me that they had no crib for the 1-year-old and had been putting the child to sleep between them for several months. The Pima County CASA Coordinator, Krissa

Erickson, referred me to their CASA Support Council, who generously provided funds for a crib, mattress and bedding for the family. They also funded a new high chair, as the family was feeding the child in the stroller. I was also made aware that they provided gift cards for D's recent birthday, reimbursed me mileage for my trips to Tucson, they have agreements with different locations to pay for outings, and

recently they provided funds through a JCP gift card to get D some new uniforms for school.

I certainly spend a fair amount of my own money supporting D, the baby and the family as I can. But it is good to know that through the generosity of the CASA Support Councils, the work we do for foster children can be further enhanced to meet some of their special financial needs. I encourage all CASAs to reach out to Abby to find out how the local support council can also help you with your individual cases.





## Cochise County Council for CASA

is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to the unmet needs of abused neglected and abandoned children in the CASA of Cochise County Program. The primary focus is to ensure that educational progress of CASA children through tutoring and scholarships. In addition the council provides clothing, toys and personal items.

***If your CASA child/youth has an unmet need, consider the Cochise County Council for CASA to help!!***

Call your CASA Coordinator  
at 432-7521 **OR**

Send an email to  
[Adodge@courts.az.gov](mailto:Adodge@courts.az.gov)

## Juanita Adamson

The CASA of the Month for August 2015 is Juanita Adamson!

Juanita is currently assigned to two cases; one she took on before I began working here, and another that I assigned her. The one that I assigned to her is a difficult case (as so many of them are)... But to make it worse, I didn't realize that one of the two children was placed in Willcox. Juanita has never complained to me about the distance, and she continues to make it work. She is clearly dedicated to the best interest of these children!

If you don't know Juanita, I highly recommend getting to know her. Juanita is an incredibly sweet, caring person. However, don't let her demeanor fool you. Juanita knows her cases inside and out and always provides detailed, accurate information when advocating for these children. If she notices that something isn't being done, or isn't being done correctly, she is not afraid to speak up and get things rolling.

Juanita, thank you for all your hard work!  
We are lucky to have you!

# volunteer of the Month!

## August 2015



# Support Group Meeting of September 8th

by Cochise County CASA Volunteers

**Mary Blanchard** wrote:

In our support group meeting on Sept. 8th, Lynn mentioned that she had had difficulty getting case managers to call or email her back when she contacted them. We talked about this, and later I emailed the CASAs who were at the support group meeting and shared what I do. Here is the content of that email:

Sometimes I think about why something isn't working, and I was thinking about Lynn's comment that her DCS case manager didn't email her back when she asked for an update.

Here is the Blanchard approach, perfected by 10 years of trial and error. For the past 5 years, I've been using the following method, and it usually works.

1. When I need information from DCS or behavioral health services or anyone else, I write an email and I state why and when I need the information. Most of the time it is for my court report.
2. Next I write up a list of questions that I need answers for. Each item is short and specific, i.e. What is the current

case plan? (something I frequently don't know).

3. I leave space under each question to illustrate that I need an answer (they cannot actually write in this space).
4. When I have finished my list, I ask if there is anything I forgot to ask.

If I need to talk to my DCS case manager, I call and leave a message. Then if I really need to talk to the person, I call Sylvia Bankson (224-5880) and seek her help in locating them. Only rarely have I had to go up the chain to Angela Grissom ([AGrissom@azdes.gov](mailto:AGrissom@azdes.gov)). When I do this, I email the "guilty party" and add Angela as a recipient. This nearly always works.

Lynn, you might try asking specific questions and conclude by asking if there is anything you forgot to ask.

Chris was concerned that her boy was being medicated without a diagnosis of what was causing the problem. Chris wanted to know how to go about asking for him to be evaluated. Kathleen, a brand new CASA volunteer (also a retired dentist) told us what

she needed to do. She needs a diagnostic test administered by a pediatrician who specializes in behavioral disturbances. Chris is going to ask for this at the next CFT for her child. She was so enthusiastic, she even emailed the information to me.

Later, Chris decided to contact Dr. DeLuca and ask for more information. Dr. De Luca told her that she needs to ask for a Functional Behavioral Assessment. This is exactly what Kathleen told us. Chris next contacted the child's DCS case manager who told her that arrangements need to be set up through AzCA (the child's behavioral health service). Chris went in person to talk to the AzCA behavioral case manager, but she was not available, so Chris intends to keep trying AzCA or to bring it up at the next CFT (whichever comes first).

**Kathleen Shaughnessy** wrote:

My first CASA Support Group meeting proved to be very helpful to me. Other CASA volunteers listened to my concerns about the conflicting emotions I've been having. My child is just a baby, and to know that I will make a recommendation to either separate her from her natural parents or keep her with them has been tough. I'm helping to make a decision that will affect her for the rest of her life. Since I'm new at this, I so appreciated

*~Continued on next page*

## Support Group Meeting of September 8th (Continued)

by Cochise County CASA Volunteers

the input from others, who assured me that my recommendation to do what is best for her, to keep her safe and secure, is what matters. It's why I'm doing this.

I was able to listen to other's concerns also, and learn from them. I was even able to contribute with some possible answers to their concerns. The meeting was a nice get-together with folks I have something in common with: a desire to help make a difference in someone's life. Thank you Abby, Chris, Mary, and Lynn! It was fun!

**New Meeting Time!!**  
**Now the 2nd Thursday of**  
**each month - 10:00-12:00!!!**

**October 8th Meeting:**

Home of Lynn Vanderdasson

5776 E. Perry Lane  
Hereford, AZ 85615

**Come join us!**

## Celebrating Anniversaries!

Recognizing CASA volunteers for their years of service based upon the date of their first Order of Appointment.



**Lynn Vanderdasson**  
10/10/2012 (3 years)

# Welcome

to the following people  
who should be beginning  
their first cases within the  
next month:

James LeClair  
Melissa Avant  
Morrissa Berkley  
Bekki Ray  
Cheryl Tomlinson



## A New CASA Kid

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

LuRue and I were riding in my car. We were talking about a million important things, and I drove right past our destination. She very quickly noticed, but I did not. She alerted me to my error and told me I missed the turn.

It immediately became clear to me why this had happened. Every CASA kid I have ever had has been responsible for directions. I drive and the child gets us there. I work with teenagers, so I might have to modify this if I get younger kids, although it has worked with 3 siblings, ages 7, 9, and 10.

I explained this to LuRue. She thought for a moment and accepted the challenge. From that moment on, she was very careful to remind me when it was time to turn. Being LuRue (who notices every little detail), she stepped way beyond her assigned task and began to check out my driving. **(Ed. Note: *Alleged backseat driver has a very healthy survival instinct!*)** She would comment on my technique using the brakes. I don't slam them on, but I do not waste time when I come to a stop. And I certainly don't linger when I make a turn. I always use my

blinker, and yes, I did turn on the windshield wipers, but only once. She is very good about using her seatbelt, so I didn't have to tell her the car wouldn't move if she doesn't have her seatbelt fastened.

She was very busy because she had taken on an extra job. It was a given that she was responsible for directions, but she was also kind enough to monitor my driving. I don't usually have adults riding in my car, but LuRue is so dedicated and observant and truly cares that we arrive at our proper destination that I feel she is as reliable as any of my CASA kids, who are very reliable indeed. Of course I have no intention of sharing with them that she voluntarily took on another task when she critiqued my driving.

Very early in my career as a CASA, I got tired driving past my destination because my CASA kid and I were too busy talking. I solved the problem by making the child responsible for directions. Every single child has been able to do this. And not one single child has complained. It is a responsible task with observable results, and it results in us

getting to where we are going.

Just last week, one of my 'over 18' girls and I were driving to a Mexican fast food café. We were talking, and I drove past the turn (not intentionally because I didn't notice we had done this), and the girl told me she was sorry, but she had missed the turn. She redirected us, and we reached our destination. All was well and the burritos were delicious.

I have found that all young people need to feel a sense of accomplishment. For me especially because I do have a problem following directions, my CASA kids very quickly realize that it really does help us to arrive where we need to go if they take over the responsibility for directions. They feel good about themselves, and I always notice and validate that they have gotten us to our destination.

All of us can find ways to make our CASA kid feel that he/she is important. There are many, many things a CASA can find to do that will contribute to the child's sense of self-esteem. I used to let each one have his/her own radio station in my car. In the car I have now, I don't know how to set the stations.

*~Continued on next page*

## A New CASA Kid

[Continued]

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County  
CASA Volunteer

When I master this, or one of my CASA kids knows how to do it, I will do this again.

Meanwhile the same 18-year-old girl I mentioned above is also in charge of upgrading my cell phone skills. She validated my accomplishment when I sent **two** text messages. Unfortunately, my two granddaughters texted back immediately, and I am still gearing up to text them back. Then my daughter found out I did this, and now she wants me to text **her**. All this is entirely too technical for my comfort zone. It might even be affecting my self-esteem!!!

## Kudos



### **Mary Blanchard**

*FCRB 8/12/15*

The Board applauds the placement and the Court Appointed Special Advocate for their efforts toward supporting C's overall progress, stability and success. The Board greatly appreciates the Court Appointed Special Advocate for continuing to be available to C as a support person providing her additional oversight and insight.

### **Ned Letto**

*Div 1 Minute Entry Order*

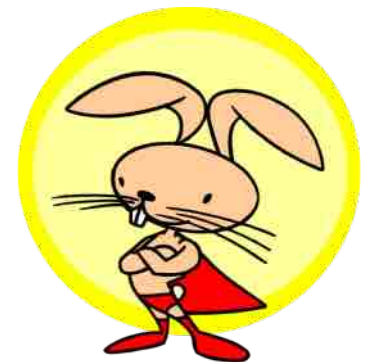
The court thanked the CASA for his work in this matter.

### **Ned Letto**

Thank you very much, Ned, for your dedication to our children and families. You transport a child on your weekends from Tucson in order to make visitation between a child and his family possible. We appreciate all you do as does the family in helping to get closer to reunifying.

We thank you!

Mellissa Spens and Angela Grissom  
DCS Ongoing Unit  
AZ Department of Child Safety



# If You Want Something Done...

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

One of my first lessons as a CASA was to be willing to step up and get something done if and when I came up with a way to do it.

When it came time for one of my 'dads' to file for custody of his child, he discovered that the system was not going to be able to offer him any help. He got the custody forms for Maricopa and Pima counties. Cochise County does not have its own forms. It allows people to file using with either the Maricopa or Pima forms. Dad soon discovered that the Pima form is easier, so that was the form he chose. He struggled for a while and finally gave up. The team realized he was not going to do it. I realized he was not going to do it. Nothing happened.

Finally I decided to ask one of my fellow bridge players to help. He had several degrees, with law being one of them. He was teaching a bridge lesson the first time I tried to call, but when I called back, he graciously agreed to help. I called Dad and told him to let me know when he was available. Dad took several weeks to set a date, but we finally connected. I called my friend, and he was still willing to help. I confirmed everything the night before we were to meet.

The next day, I took my 90-year-old friend over to meet my child's father. I didn't know what to expect, so I sat quiet as a mouse in the corner and pretended to be engrossed in my book. The introductions went well. My friend told the dad about himself and his training and told him that he was retired, and the only work he did was pro bono.

They set to work filling out the forms, and it wasn't too long before Dad offered to do plumbing or house repairs since he wasn't allowed to offer cash. They worked for two hours, and Dad had shared all the information he could remember. My friend took everything and said he would go over it and make a list of what was still needed.

Several days later my friend burst into bridge. We were in the middle of a game, and every player stopped and waited to find out what was going on. The whole club found out that my friend had a list of what information was still needed to fill out the form. The information was typed (small type) without a single space between questions. No one, not even those of us with pretty good vision, could tell what was written. I thanked my friend, took the paper home after bridge and typed it (using size 12 font), with

each question on a separate line, and leaving space for answers. There were 3 pages of questions when I finished.

I took this over to Dad to complete. He is still working on it, but it should be finished shortly. I am optimistic that the information will be complete and the custody papers can be filed. Dad asked me again to offer plumbing work and household repair, which I did.

My policy over the years has been to try to find someone official to do the task. Sometimes this works; sometimes it doesn't. I also learned that if I sit down and try to figure out what needs to be done I sometimes come up with a feasible plan. Armed with my plan, I volunteer to "try" to do what is needed. Since I don't like to fail, I somehow manage to come up with the resources to get the task done. My feeling of accomplishment is unbelievable.

Before you think I fancy myself as Wonder Woman, I have to confess that I nearly always look around till I find someone with expertise in the area, and I convince them to offer their services. This is actually how I get the job done. I give them full credit, and my child or someone connected with the case gets the help they need.

# Operator Error

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

My cell phone and I have a delicate relationship. I do not encourage people to call or text me. I do carry my cell phone to make calls when I am away from home, and I answer responses to my calls if I can get the phone operational in time.

I was at bridge in the middle of a dismal game, my cell phone kept beeping and everyone figured out it was my phone that was not in silent mode. Four ladies who play, very quickly volunteered to assist me. I told them I had not a clue why the phone was beeping.

Two ladies were cell phone savvy, so they offered to check out the situation. They opened the email icon, and there were no new emails. They opened the message icon and there were no new messages. They opened the phone icon and didn't see anything.

I took back my phone and saw a small icon at the bottom. I opened that and discovered an endless stream of names and phone numbers. I was too worried for it to register that the list was in alphabetical order. By coincidence, the "A's" have 4 entries that all refer to two of my cases. Both cases are not

doing well, so I did what I normally do when I first discover a problem—I went into panic mode. I had time to call Abby, but she was unavailable.

After I got home, I tried Abby again, and she was still unavailable. I emailed another contact. Then, I called the girl who is most at risk, and she was pleased that I called and told me everything was fine with her.

The contact I had emailed called me back to find out what I wanted. I told her I called the girl who is most at risk and found out she was okay. She agreed that she was, and we had a short chat about this good news.

I opened up my cell phone, opened the phone icon and opened the icon at the bottom that started it all. I looked at the names and the phone numbers and noticed that the names were all in alphabetical order. This was a small space because most of the area was taken up by the alphabet box. I scrolled down until I realized I was looking a list of names and numbers.

I relaxed. Nothing was wrong except my ability to use the features on my phone. It is nice to know about this "new" feature. I think

it somehow replaced my contacts icon, which has disappeared. I will test it out on something low-key in importance and see what happens.

I am certainly a long way away from becoming fixated on my phone!

**Ed. Note: Clarification emails as follow-up to submission of article:**

**LuRue**—I understand from the article that your Contacts icon must have changed, so was not recognizable to you, but.....what was the beeping?

**Mary**—I don't know. And I guess I don't care, because I ignore it. It still beeps.

**Word Bank:** ABBY, ADOPTION, AZCA, CASA COUNCIL, CENPATICO, CFT, CONTACT LOG, COURT, FAMILY, FCRB, GAL, GROUP, MARY, SIBLING

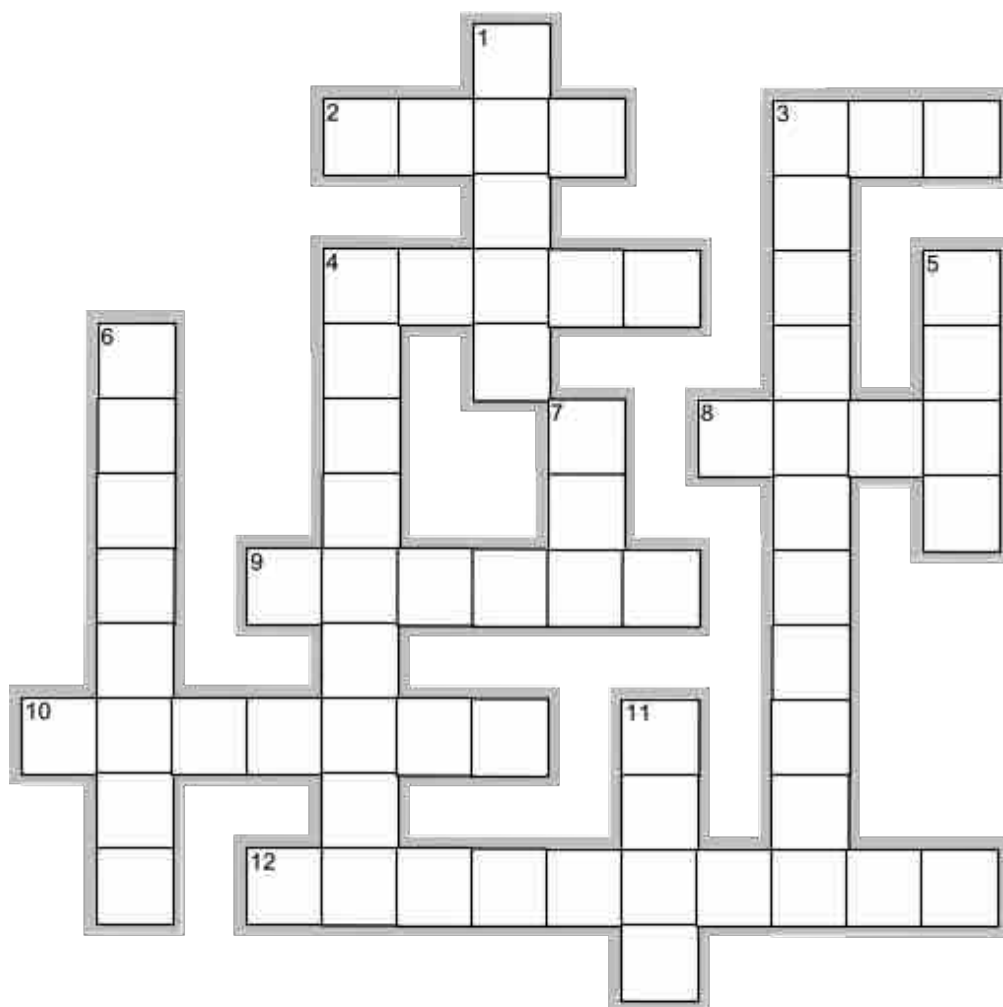
What is this??

See next page!



# Like Crossword Puzzles?

Try this one designed and submitted by **Bud Dragoo**,  
Cochise County CASA Volunteer



## Across

2. \_\_\_\_ Blanchard; frequent contributor to the Newsletter
3. Group that meets regularly to discuss a variety of support (abbr)
4. \_\_\_\_ Report Submission to the judge two weeks before a hearing
8. Organization which monitors children
9. Foster \_\_\_\_ Temporary caregiver for children
10. Brother or sister
12. Monthly activity journal (2 words)

## Down

1. \_\_\_\_ Home (foster care for older children)
3. Possible source for expense reimbursement (2 words)
4. Contracted Health care agency
5. Our Leader
6. Goal for some children
7. Special kind of CASA
11. A behavioral health agency (abbr)

### Hints:

Word Bank on Page 12

Solution on Page 17

# CASA Recognition Dinner!

Thursday, September 24, 2015 at JPO Conference Room



Pat & Ned Letto



Kathy & Michael Shaughnessy



Patti Hager



Lynn & Leon Vanderdasson



Lin Wright & daughter  
Corey Sandlin



Deb Nishikida & Sharon Travis



Rod & Cathy Carter



Mary Kay & Art Holcomb



Judge Terry Bannon with  
Mary Kay Holcomb



Anita & Kevin Farrow



Zanetta & Robert Boughan, with  
daughters Angelica and Abigail



Cathy & Jim LeClair

*A delicious dinner  
from 'Chipotle's' was  
enjoyed by all!*



Cheryl & Bryan  
Tomlinson

Apologies to the Tomlinsons who almost got missed & to Patricia Munoz, who did get missed altogether.

*~Continued on next page*



# More from the CASA Recognition Dinner!



Ned Letto - 5 years



Mary Kay Holcomb - 5 years



Zanetta Boughan - 10 years



LuRue Troyer - 10 years

Certificates acknowledging milestone years of service were presented to those who were present.



Patti Hager - 20 years



Some new CASA volunteers were sworn in and congratulated by Judge Terry Bannon.



Jim LeClair  
Lin Wright  
Kathy Shaughnessy  
Cathy Carter  
Cheryl Tomlinson

and.....

## 2015 CASA of the Year!

Patti Hager

Patti receives a monogrammed day planner, complete with a place for her business cards!



~Continued on next page

# More from the CASA Recognition Dinner!



Thanks to the worker bees that put together such an awesome celebration!

Lisette Borbon — Cochise County CASA  
Support Staff

Abby Dodge — Cochise County CASA  
Coordinator



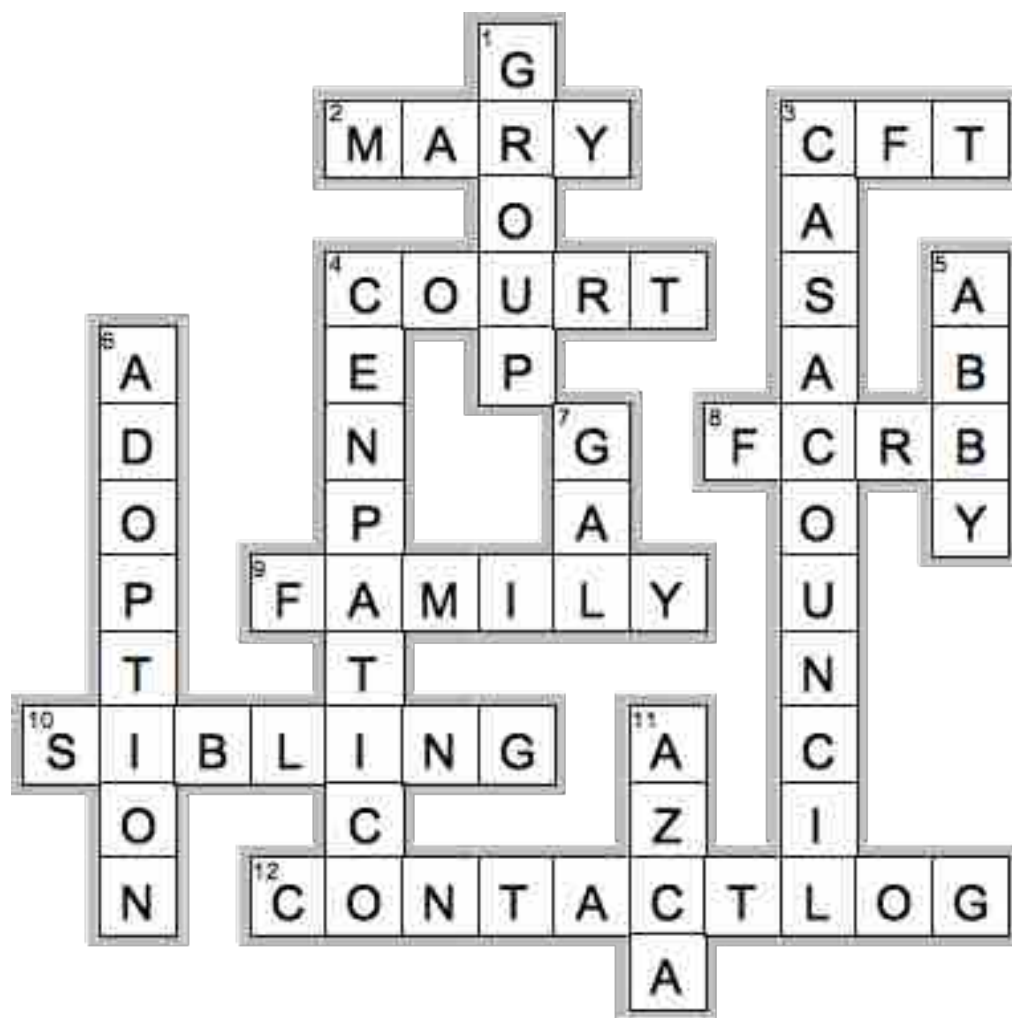
Abby shows the plaque she has started on which the CASA of the Year will be added each year.

There are gaps, so please fill them in if you can supply the missing names.



# Crossword Puzzle Solution

Solution to Crossword Puzzle on Page 13



EclipseCrossword.com

## Across

2. **MARY**—\_\_\_ Blanchard; frequent contributor to the Newsletter
3. **CFT**—Group that meets regularly to discuss a variety of support (abbr)
4. **COURT**—\_\_\_\_\_ Report Submission to the judge two weeks before a hearing
8. **FCRB**—Organization which monitors children
9. **FAMILY**—Foster \_\_\_\_\_ Temporary caregiver for children
10. **SIBLING**—Brother or sister
12. **CONTACTLOG**—Monthly activity journal (2 words)

## Down

1. **GROUP**—\_\_\_\_\_ Home (foster care for older children)
3. **CASACOUNCIL**—Possible source for expense reimbursement (2 words)
4. **CENPATICO**—Contracted Health care agency
5. **ABBY**—Our Leader
6. **ADOPTION**—Goal for some children
7. **GAL**—Special kind of CASA
11. **AZCA**—A behavioral health agency (abbr)



# From the Manual

**From a Guest Manual!** An informational document from U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services regarding Special Juvenile Immigration Status (SJIS).



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

## Special Immigrant Juvenile Status: Information for Juvenile Courts

### What is Special Immigrant Juvenile Status?

Some children present in the United States without legal immigration status may be in need of humanitarian protection because they have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent. Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) status is an immigration classification that may allow for these vulnerable children to immediately apply for lawful permanent resident status ("LPR" status or a "Green Card").

### Who is Eligible?

A child must be unmarried, under 21 years of age at the time of filing with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), physically present in the United States, and have a qualifying juvenile court order. SIJ-eligible children may come from a variety of circumstances, including, but not limited to, children in federal custody in the U.S. without parents or legal guardians, children in a state's child welfare system (for example, foster care), and children in the court-ordered custody of a state agency or individual. This can include adoption or guardianship.



*~Continued on next page*

# From the Manual

(Continued)

## What is the Role of the Juvenile Court?

Juvenile courts issue orders that help determine a child's eligibility for SIJ status. A child cannot apply to USCIS for SIJ status without an order from a juvenile court. However, juvenile judges should note that providing an order does not grant SIJ status or a "Green Card" - only USCIS can grant or deny these benefits. The role of the court is to make factual findings based on state law about the abuse, neglect, or abandonment; family reunification; and best interests of the child.

## Which Courts May Issue the Order?

A juvenile court is a court in the United States that has jurisdiction under state law to make judicial determinations about the custody and care of children. Examples include: juvenile, family, orphans, dependency, guardianship, probate and delinquency courts.

## What is the Role of USCIS?

USCIS determines eligibility for SIJ status by adjudicating the **Form I-360**, Petition for Amerasian, Widow(er), or Special Immigrant, which includes review of supporting documentation and the juvenile court order. USCIS may also determine a special immigrant juvenile's eligibility for lawful permanent resident status by adjudicating **Form I-485**, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status.

## Helpful Tips for Juvenile Courts

- **Be familiar with current immigration law.** The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) section 101(a)(27)(J) establishes the



definition of a Special Immigrant Juvenile. This definition can change by acts of Congress. For example, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, **Pub. L. 110-457** amended the SIJ **definition**. These statutory changes supersede portions of the Code of Federal Regulations relating to SIJ status (**8 CFR 204.11**). Note: All findings must be based on state law.

- **Ensure HHS consent has been obtained if it is necessary.** If a child

currently in the custody of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) seeks a juvenile court order that also alters his or her custody status or placement, HHS must specifically consent to the court's jurisdiction. If the order simply restates the child's current ORR

*~Continued on next page*

# From the Manual

(Continued)

placement, HHS consent is not required. See ORR's website at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/ucs>.

- **Be timely.** A child must obtain a juvenile court order and apply to USCIS for SIJ status before the child ages out of the juvenile court's jurisdiction (usually before 18 years of age), and before he or she turns 21 (even in states where juvenile court jurisdiction extends beyond age 21). In some cases, children may need to obtain SIJ status prior to turning 18 years of age to access certain benefits (such as federally-funded foster care).
- **Ensure the court order makes all required findings.** The order must make the following findings:
  - o Declares the child dependent on the court, or legally commits or places the child under the custody of either a state agency or department or an individual or entity appointed by a juvenile court.
  - o Reunification with one or both of the child's parents is not viable due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, or a similar basis under state law. Note: The abuse may have occurred in the United States or prior to the child's arrival in the United States.
  - o It would not be in the child's best interest to be returned to his or her country of origin.

- **Provide a detailed court order.** The Secretary of Homeland Security, through USCIS, must consent to the grant of SIJ status. This means that for a child to be eligible for SIJ status, USCIS must determine that the juvenile court order was sought primarily to obtain relief from abuse, neglect or abandonment, rather than primarily to obtain an immigration benefit. Template orders are usually not sufficient to establish this. The court order should include the factual basis for the findings on parental reunification, dependency or custody, and best interests. Alternatively, the child or the child's attorney may submit separate findings of fact, records from the judicial proceedings, or affidavits summarizing the evidence presented to the court. The court order need not be overly detailed, and need not recount all of the circumstances of the abuse, abandonment or neglect, but must show the factual basis for the court's findings.



## Seeing Guatemala in a Whole New Way

by LuRue Troyer, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

When my younger daughter Teresa contacted me this spring, I had just returned from a 3-month tour. I wasn't even totally unpacked, and now I had to decide if I wanted to go again on another overseas trip in three months' time. This would be another volunteering excursion, but different from anything I had done before. But in the end, I think I was committed to the idea before my daughter was.

The Hope Alliance (THA) is headquartered in Park City, Utah. <http://thehopealliance.org/> Teresa had volunteered in their office a couple of times and was impressed with the professionalism, the dedication, and the camaraderie of the people she met there. The organization sponsors health clinics, both local and worldwide... currently to Guatemala, Peru, Haiti, India & Nepal. Our Guatemala excursion would be a vision clinic in Chimaltenango, with the help of the local Guatemalan Lions Club.

Teresa talked to some people who had helped on the previous clinic, and we decided to follow their example: we went a week early to take five days of immersion Spanish lessons. For me, it was a return visit and I was eager to see the changes that had taken place in the colorful town of Antigua, Guatemala where we would be staying. I had "lived" there before...in 1989 for a month, and again in 1990 for a month.

Two and a half decades later, much of the charm remains, but I couldn't ignore that the quaint town has definitely been "discovered". The Mayan women and their children in their colorful clothing still roam the cobblestone streets, selling their weavings and other trinkets. But now the visitor must dodge many more tourists and traffic than what I experienced before. I did, however, find my original "home" and "school"...that was fun!



There are many excellent schools teaching immersion Spanish, and we were pleased with ours. We could have opted for a homestay, but instead we chose a delightful B&B just off the central square in the thick of things. Weekend parades organized under our balcony window, along with mimes performing before appreciative audiences.

Both Teresa and I have taken immersion Spanish numerous times, so our teachers used our class times to hone our conversational skills. That extra practice would serve us well the following week when we would be participating in the vision clinic.

Antigua offers many interesting sights and places to explore. When we weren't checking out some ruins or fascinating museums, we

*~Continued on next page*

## Seeing Guatemala in a Whole New Way (Continued)

were sampling foods from around the world. With more than 250 restaurants in Antigua, we wouldn't have had to repeat (though we did).

Most of the team arrived during our second weekend and we switched hotels in order to be based in the same place with them. Our team of 25 included all age groups, including three families. The team leader is one of the co-founders of the organization; his passion for the work they do is very apparent. He and his wife are doctors in Utah; their two teenage children jumped right in to do whatever needed to be done. It was a pleasure working with that family, as well as with the other two families.

The 5-day clinic was held in a neighboring town, Chimaltenango, which was a 40-minute van ride away.

Each morning when we arrived, there was a line of people, waiting for the doors to be opened. The local Lions Club members set to work, preparing to process the people as



they came in. The rest of us learned 'on the job', but once we were oriented, it was a beautiful thing to watch the whole process unfold.

Two volunteers used Retinomaxes, hand-held devices to "read" each eye of a patient. A slip of paper with a prescription was generated, which went to the volunteers manning the computers.

Thousands of pairs of donated eyeglasses were available on tables, each one in a



plastic bag with a unique number. The computer people wrote the closest available matches on the prescription slip. Other volunteers "filled" the prescription by pulling out the possibilities & placing them into a small plastic basket. More volunteers then took a basket & went to the waiting area to find the person waiting to be fitted.



*~Continued on next page*



## Seeing Guatemala in a Whole New Way (Continued)

In addition, there were thousands of “readers” of both positive and negative strengths, the negative glasses helping near-sighted people be able to see at a distance. If we tried the possible prescription glasses without success, we then moved on to the “readers” until we found something that permitted the person to be able to see better. In some cases, we gave two pairs of glasses: one for distance, one for reading and close-up work.



When we weren't fitting people, there were other things to be done.



LuRue, Rebecca (medical graduate), Teresa

Two machines, called Lensometers, were used to read prescriptions of glasses that had not yet been processed. It was fun to learn those machines.

One of our group was a young Guatemalan woman who had just graduated from medical school. A friend of hers

happened to be covering the story for a local newspaper, so we ended up on the front page.

During the week, we were able to provide nearly 2,500 people, young and old, with eyeglasses that they would not have been able to afford. Try to imagine sitting across the table from someone who tries on a pair of glasses, looks around the room, and then a look crosses his or her face —first of puzzlement, then of surprise, and finally of joy. It is a thrill like no other to be a part of that!

All week long, we got hugs, kisses on cheeks, and copious thanks from people. They thought **we** were helping **them**, but in truth, we were the ones coming away much richer for the experience!



~Continued on next page



## Seeing Guatemala in a Whole New Way (Continued)

The day before Teresa and I returned home, we went on an excursion to one of the many volcanoes in the area. This one, Pacaya, is an active one, though mostly quiet at the moment. It did erupt violently, though, five years ago, uprooting families all over the region. I learned a lot about the frightening experience by speaking my broken Spanish to the woman whose horse I rode. The trail is steep and at an altitude that sucks your breath away, so I was happy to find a woman whose horse would help me make it to the top. I



marveled at this tiny woman, who walks to the top two times a day, accommodating tourists like me.

Our days were full and after two weeks, we were ready to come home, but it was a memorable trip that we both enjoyed immensely. We are already talking about... "next time"!



Photo credit: Bucket List Journey Blog



Teresa roasting marshmallows at a vent...just like a campfire!